The shifting cityscape of Amsterdam

Thesis Abstract
Gentrification is, roughly put, the transformation of working-class neighborhoods to higher socio-economic residency. The human geography literature has so far seen very few attempts to spatially map the process of gentrification inside a city. In this thesis, I develop and test a methodology to fill that gap in the literature. I build a test case for Amsterdam using an extremely rich dataset of housing transaction prices, which enables me to look at the change in spatial patterns over time at a very detailed level. Using these data, I create a number of animated GIS (AGIS), which show a number of nuanced patterns in the spatial spreading of gentrification throughout the city over the period 1985-2010. The data show an axis of expensive housing cutting through the city from the Canal District to the Vondelpark, from which gentrification radiates outward, claiming neighborhood by neighborhood in a wave-like pattern over the decades as the (higher) middle classes returned to the city center. There are some factors stopping or slowing its spread. The strongest of these are large, connected blocks of socially rented housing. However, small bodies of water and official (yet non-physical) neighborhood boundaries also appear to be surprisingly effective at slowing the process.

The full thesis is available online: http://tinyurl.com/me2zczb

Siberia
Colloquially known as the 'Siberia of Amsterdam', Noord has been the stepchild of both municipal policy and aspiring luxury buyers for decades. This has certainly changed in the past. Recently, the municipality has pumped billions into Noord in the form of eye-catching waterfront developments and a completely new metro tunnel connecting Noord to the rest of the city. Whether this will result in turning around the population of the area remains to be seen; the housing prices are as low as outside the ring road.

Why Watergraafsmeer?
This area presents an exception to the city-wide pattern. Whereas rising prices generally spread out like a wave from the axis between the Canal District and Vondelpark, this area gentrified completely on its own while surrounding neighborhoods remained poor.

Background
Amsterdam is changing rapidly. Although the city has always exerted a strong pull on the young and adventurous, after the Second World War there was a period when the city population strongly declined, housing prices sank; the municipality seemed at a loss to stem the tide. However, this population decline created room for change and new initiative in the city, and as city living became fashionable once more, Amsterdam has experienced a wave of gentrification over the past decades. This poster shows how that wave spread throughout the city and explains some of the factors behind it.

Animated GIS on a poster
The core of this thesis is an animated GIS, which cannot be shown on a poster. To give an idea of the uses of such an AGIS, here is as an example a series of stills showing the Oud West area, just north of the very wealthy Vondelpark neighbourhood. The stills show how, over two decades, rising housing prices moved through the area like a tide coming out of the south and the east, stopping against the Kostverlorenvaart water. Full video: http://tinyurl.com/kpyp7da.

Legend
Housing price as % of the citywide average
50 - 60% 60 - 70% 70 - 80% 80 - 90% 90 - 100% 100 - 110% 110 - 120% 120 - 130% 130 - 140% 140 - 150% >150%
Legend
Waters
Roads
Buildings
Gentrification spreading direction

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